

Crime and Drugs

Everyone has the right to live in a safe community, free from crime and fear. In order to prevent crime before it starts, we must teach responsibility and values at an early age, support parents, and create positive opportunities like after-school programs and Boys and Girls Clubs. If young people break the law, they need to be held accountable. For hardened criminals of any age, there needs to be hard time and tough sentences to ensure they are taken off our streets.

Throughout our state, the leading cause of crime is methamphetamine. This illegal drug destroys lives and families, while leaving toxic waste in our communities. Meth use is involved in over half of the cases of burglary, identity theft, and violent crime in our region. In Congress, I have lead the fight to stop this ruinous drug by creating the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine, bringing funding home to help local law enforcement catch and prosecute drug traffickers, and fighting for special assistance for Southwest Washington through the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program. I have also introduced and supported legislation to help individuals receive adequate and effective addiction treatment services and access to prevention programs.

I have also supported legislation and grant programs that put additional law enforcement officers on our streets. And, working closely with the U.S. Attorney's office, I helped establish a coordinated Federal Investigative Center in Vancouver. This center has brought increased federal resources and coordination to crack down on bank robberies, mail fraud, serious drug offenses, and other federal crimes. I am now leading the effort to bring a federal courthouse to Southwest Washington.

There are few things more basic in our society than public safety. I have been proud to work hand in hand with our law enforcement agencies at every level to help make our homes, our neighborhoods, our communities, and our families as safe and crime-free as possible.

Methamphetamine

Meth abuse and production are behind the majority of burglaries, identity thefts, and violent homicides in our state. As a clinical psychologist, Congressman Baird worked with meth addicts, learning firsthand the destructive potential of the drug. That is why he has led the fight in Congress to keep meth out of our communities and schools.

When he first arrived on Capitol Hill, Congressman Baird was surprised to learn how few of his colleagues knew about the dangers of meth. To remedy this situation, Congressman Baird helped found the bipartisan Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine (Meth Caucus). Since its inception, the Meth Caucus has grown steadily in membership and influence, working to increase funding for law enforcement, prevention, and treatment efforts throughout the nation.

In 2006, Congressman Baird was successful in passing legislation to create a National Meth Awareness Week to increase awareness of the meth epidemic and educate the public about the dangers of meth use. President Bush heeded the call of the need for greater awareness and declared November 30, 2006 as National Meth Awareness Day.

Congressman Baird has been instrumental in bringing federal funding home to help our local communities fight meth. The President's budget this year included devastating cuts to meth prevention and other crime related programs, including the COPS program and the Safe and Drug Free Schools program. As a Member of the House Budget Committee, Congressman Baird worked in Congress to ensure that these programs are sufficiently funded and that meth prevention programs have the resources they need. He has also helped bring millions of dollars to local meth programs that strengthen law enforcement and offer drug treatment, prevention, and education services to keep people drug-free.

Congressman Baird was an original cosponsor of the comprehensive Combat Meth Act, which was signed into law in early 2006. This important legislation repeals the federal "blister pack exemption," which allows unlimited sales of pseudoephedrine pills; imposes limits on the purchase of pseudoephedrine; increases international monitoring of major meth precursors; and toughens federal penalties against meth traffickers, meth smugglers, meth cooks, and meth dealers. He also was an original cosponsor of legislation to focus on clean-up requirements for former meth labs. This legislation, which passed the House of Representatives in February 2007, will establish guidelines for the clean-up of those labs which have devastated communities in Southwest Washington.

As U.S. communities have become more efficient and aggressive in shutting down harmful domestic meth labs, international traffickers have begun filling the local demand by importing finished products. National drug and lab seizure data suggest that roughly two-thirds of the meth abused in the U.S. comes from "super labs" in countries like Mexico. That is why Congressman Baird has been working to address the

international trafficking of meth. Congressman Baird has publicly called on President Bush to convene an international summit to address the control of meth and its precursors. Congressman Baird also successfully passed an amendment to urge the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to arrange an international meth summit and craft a coordinated strategy to address the international meth trafficking problem.

Federal Law Enforcement Presence in Southwest Washington

Local law enforcement approached Congressman Baird with concerns that a greater federal law enforcement presence was needed in Southwest Washington. With recent growth, Clark County became the fifth largest in our state, yet the surrounding region had no full-time federal magistrate or prosecutor to investigate serious federal crimes. The nearest federal district court and U.S. Assistant Attorney from which a warrant could be obtained was in Tacoma, 140 miles north of Vancouver. Because of this distance, federal crimes committed in Southwest Washington were often prosecuted under state or local laws, and at lower numbers, failing to hold criminals fully accountable for crimes they committed.

Congressman Baird worked with local law enforcement officials and the U.S. Attorney for Western Washington to bring an enhanced federal law enforcement presence to Southwest Washington. On November 10, 2003, the Federal Investigative Center officially opened in Vancouver. The center provides a centralized office for federal agents from the U.S. Marshals Service; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF); Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Postal Inspection Service. By having a single, coordinated location to work from in our area, these agencies can share information and resources and will be much more successful in pursuing cases.

Congressman Baird also led the effort in the House to bring a federal courthouse to Southwest Washington. He introduced legislation to add Vancouver to the list of locations where court in the Western District of Washington can be held. Previously, court could only be held in Seattle, Tacoma, and Bellingham. There is an overwhelming need in Southwest Washington to better accommodate the law enforcement needs of our communities. This bill is an important step toward Vancouver acquiring a U.S. district courthouse to help the region more efficiently prosecute serious crimes and will be an integral part of our state's judicial system.

Child Abuse

All states are required to have a mechanism in place for reporting child abuse, and 43 states currently maintain their own child abuse registries. However, there is no formal mechanism in place to monitor the movement of convicted abusers or those under investigation across state lines. Each year, many abuse cases are closed with no finding because the alleged abuser moves to another state and cannot be located.

Without a nationwide tracking system, alleged abusers can simply move across state lines to avoid investigation and possibly commit additional child abuse crimes. Congressman Baird learned about this issue from a constituent in Southwest Washington, and introduced an amendment to the Child's Safety Act of 2005 to work towards the creation of a nationwide, interstate tracking system for individuals convicted or, or under investigation for, child abuse.

Body Armor for Law Enforcement

Law enforcement officers risk their lives every day to protect our safety. Unfortunately, many officers, particularly those in smaller, rural areas, are sent into harms way without sufficient bulletproof vests. Congressman Baird has cosponsored legislation and worked closely with local agencies to help secure grants for the purchase of state-of-the-art body armor. The Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act reauthorizes a federal matching grant program to help local and state police agencies purchase body armor. Thanks to this program, hundreds of bulletproof vests have been obtained for our local police and sheriffs.

Department
of Justice

Federal
Bureau of Investigation

United
States Secret Service

ONDCP

DEA

HIDTA

NW
HIDTA

NW

HIDTA-Drug Education

Washington
State Attorney General

Washington
State Patrol

Clark
County Sheriff

Lewis
County Sheriff

Cowlitz
County Sheriff

Thurston
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Skamania
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Thurston
County Meth Coalition